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ABSTRACT

This publication was written in response to a need among colleges of agriculture to examine alternative recruitment strategies. It assesses efforts by the University of Georgia's College of Agriculture to recruit students through an annual campus visitation program entitled "Ag Horizons: A Career Institute." Since 1984, Ag Horizons has brought selected high school students to the Univesity for a 3-day visit to programs and facilities. The goals of the program are to recruit students of high academic quality and to provide a better understanding of, and a greater appreciation for, agriculture. This report details student characteristics, such as age, gender, background, school activities, parents' occupations, siblings, and family's level of education and then provides a program evaluation based on the postconference questionnaire administered to students at the end of each Ag Horizons program. The data indicated that Ag Horizons had a positive effect on student plans to attend college, on student plans to attend the University of Georgia as freshmen, and on student plans to enroll in the University of Georgia's College of Agriculture. Includes 11 references. (JDD)

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The Georgia Agricultural Experiment Stations
College of Agriculture, The University of Georgia

Research Report 555
October 1988

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An Evaluation of Ag Horizons: A Campus Visitation Program for Student Recruitment

Josef M. Broder, Jack E. Houston, and F. Wendell Williams

HE 023 314

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Conversion Table

U.S. Abbr.	Unit	Approximate Metric Equivalent
	Length	
mi	mile	1.609 kilometers
yd	yard	0.9144 meters
ft or '	foot	30.48 centimeters
in or "	inch	2.54 centimeters
	Area	
sq mi or mi^2	square mile	2.59 square kilometers
acre	acre	0.405 hectares *or* 4047 square meters
sq ft or ft^2	square foot	0.093 square meters
	Volume/Capacity	
gal	gallon	3.785 liters
qt	quart	0.946 liters
pt	pint	0.473 liters
fl oz	fluid ounce	29.573 milliliters or 28.416 cubic centimeters
bu	bushel	35.238 liters
cu ft or ft^3	cubic foot	0.028 cubic meters
	Mass/Weight	
ton	ton	0.907 metric ton
lb	pound	0.453 kilogram
oz	ounce	28.349 grams

Metric Abbr.	Unit	Approximate U.S. Equivalent
	Length	
km	kilometer	0.62 mile
m	meter	39.37 inches *or* 1.09 yards
cm	centimeter	0.39 inch
mm	millimeter	0.04 inch
	Area	
ha	hectare	2.47 acres
	Volume/Capacity	
liter	liter	61.02 cubic inches *or* 1.057 quarts
ml	milliliter	0.06 cubic inch *or* 0.034 fluid ounce
cc	cubic centimeter	0.061 cubic inch *or* 0.035 fluid ounce
	Mass/Weight	
MT	metric ton	1.1 tons
kg	kilogram	2.205 pounds
g	gram	0.035 ounce
mg	milligram	3.5×10^{-5} ounce

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An Evaluation of Ag Horizons: A Campus Visitation Program for Student Recruitment

Josef M. Broder, Jack E. Houston, and F. Wendell Williams

Introduction

In the face of declining enrollments, many departments and colleges of agriculture are becoming increasingly concerned about their recruitment programs. This concern is best illustrated by recent research contributions on the subject of student recruitment, such as the following. Recruitment programs have been assessed in poultry/animal science departments by Pescatore and Harter-Dennis (1987) and in agricultural economics departments by Litzenberg (1987). Programs to inform and recruit high school students have been examined by Betts and Newcomb (1986) and Reneau and Kabat (1986). Issues and challenges in recruiting have been addressed by Hildreth (1986) and Coulter (1985). Specific recruitment strategies have been developed to include students (Haque 1985) and marketing research techniques (Schuster and Costantino 1986). Related studies have examined factors associated with enrollments (Slocombe 1986) and factors considered by students in selecting a college or university (Riesenberg 1987). In general, these papers indicate a critical need for additional systematic research on alternative recruitment strategies.

This publication was written in response to a need among colleges of agriculture to examine alternative recruitment strategies. It is an assessment of recent efforts by the University of Georgia's College of Agriculture to recruit students through an annual campus visitation program entitled "AG HORIZONS: A Career Institute." More specifically, the objectives of this report are 1) to describe the Ag Horizons program at the University of Georgia, 2) to evaluate its effectiveness as a recruitment technique, and 3) to offer suggestions for adoption, implementation, and further evaluation.

Ag Horizons

Ag Horizons is an annual campus visitation program for high school students. Initiated in 1984, the program has brought selected high school students to the University of Georgia for a three-day visit of programs and facilities. The goals of the program are to recruit high school students of high academic quality and to provide a better understanding of, and a greater appreciation for, agriculture. The Ag Horizons program was modeled after a similar program at Mississippi State University entitled "Institute for Future Agricultural Leaders" (IFAL).

At its inception, Ag Horizons was jointly sponsored by the Georgia Farm Bureau Federation and coordinated by the University of Georgia College of Agriculture. In 1987, the Georgia Agricultural Alumni Association cooperated with the Farm Bureau to provide financial support

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for the program. Participants in this annual event are solicited through county Farm Bureau offices, vocational agriculture teachers, county extension agents, and high school science teachers.

The College of Agriculture arranges the speakers, tours, and other on-campus activities for the three-day programs. Programs are developed jointly by the educational program specialist in the Office of Resident Instruction and the College's Standing Committee on Recruitment. Faculty from various departments are invited to participate in these programs. Undergraduate and graduate students serve as live-in counselors for the student participants. An outline of the most recent Ag Horizons program (1987) is shown in the appendix.

Student Characteristics

General characteristics of students attending Ag Horizons for the years 1985 to 1987 are shown in table 1. These data were obtained from a preconference questionnaire administered during registration. When all groups were considered, the average age of students was 16.5 years. Approximately 43 percent of the participants were female and 67 percent were from farm backgrounds. The decline in the percentage of students from farm backgrounds over the years was attributed to special efforts to recruit students with nonfarm backgrounds. Approximately 45 percent were members of 4-H clubs, while 54 percent were members of Future Farmers of America (FFA). Nearly half had part-time jobs. On average, students participating in the program studied 7.7 hours per week. Subjects found to be the most interesting to these students were the sciences, agriculture, and mathematics.

Family characteristics of students attending Ag Horizons are shown in table 2. The percentage of students with fathers in farming declined during the period studied. Approximately 32 percent of the participants' fathers were in farming, 20 percent in small business, 12 percent in education, and 36 percent in other occupations. Approximately 38 percent of the students' mothers were housewives in households with an average of 1.5 boys and 1.2 girls.

Table 1. General Characteristics of Students Attending Ag Horizons, 1985 to 1987

Characteristic	1985	1986	1987	All
			number	
Observations	25.0	26.0	34.0	85.0
			average	
Age (years)	16.4	16.5	16.6	16.5
			percent	
Female	36.0	46.1	47.1	43.5
Background:				
% Farm	80.0	76.9	50.0	67.1
% Rural-nonfarm	12.0	15.4	26.5	18.8
% Suburban	8.0	3.8	17.6	10.6
% Urban	0.0	3.8	5.9	3.5
Activities:				
% 4-H Club	40.0	61.5	35.2	44.7
% FFA	48.0	58.3	55.9	54.2
% Sports	24.0	36.0	32.4	31.0
% Other clubs	44.0	34.6	67.6	50.5
% Part-time job	40.0	56.0	50.0	48.8

Table 1. (continued)

Characteristic	1985	1986	1987	All
Most interesting subjects in school:			percent	
% Math	24.0	12.5	26.5	21.7
% Sciences	12.0	20.9	32.3	22.9
% Agriculture	24.0	25.0	17.6	21.7
% English	12.0	16.7	11.8	13.3
% History	4.0	12.5	5.9	7.6
% Computers	4.0	0.0	0.0	1.2
% Others	8.0	13.0	5.9	11.6
			average	
Hours of study per week	7.8	6.9	8.2	7.7

College experiences of family members were thought to influence the college plans of students attending Ag Horizons. Data on colleges attended by family members are shown in table 3. Approximately 17 percent of the students' fathers had attended the University of Georgia, as had six to eight percent of their mothers, brothers, and sisters. Less than five percent of the students' family members had attended Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC), the only two-year, state-supported agricultural school in the state. The impact of the students' personal and family backgrounds on their plans to enroll in the College of Agriculture is examined in the next section.

Table 2. Family Characteristics of Students Attending Ag Horizons, 1985 to 1987

Characteristic	1985	1986	1987	All
Father's Occupation:			percent	
% Farming	48.0	46.2	14.7	31.8
% Small business	16.0	26.9	17.6	20.0
% Education	4.0	11.5	17.6	11.8
% Other	32.0	15.4	50.1	36.4
Mother's Occupation:				
% Housewife	40.0	38.5	35.3	37.6
% Secretary	28.0	15.4	17.6	16.5
% Teacher	16.0	15.4	17.6	16.5
% Nurse	4.0	11.5	5.9	7.1
% Other	12.0	19.2	26.5	23.3
Children in Family:			average	
No. of boys	1.8	1.4	1.4	1.5
No. of girls	1.1	1.3	1.2	1.2
Older Children in Family:				
No. of brothers	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.5
No. of sisters	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5

Table 3. College-Related Family Characteristics of Students Attending Ag Horizons, 1985 to 1987

Characteristic	1985	1986	1987	All
Father's College:		percent		
% None	56.0	57.7	44.1	51.8
% Univ. of Georgia	16.0	11.5	20.6	16.5
% ABAC[a]	8.0	7.7	0.0	4.7
% Out-of-state	4.0	7.7	11.8	8.2
% All others[b]	16.0	15.4	23.5	18.8
Mother's College:				
% None	32.0	50.0	47.1	43.5
% Univ. of Georgia	8.0	7.7	8.8	8.2
% ABAC[a]	0.0	0.0	5.9	2.4
% Out-of-state	4.0	3.8	0.0	2.4
% All others[b]	56.0	38.5	38.2	43.5
Brother's College:				
% None	76.0	84.6	76.5	78.8
% Univ. of Georgia	16.0	0.0	5.9	7.1
% ABAC[a]	0.0	0.0	5.9	2.4
% Out-of-state	4.0	3.8	0.0	2.4
% All others[b]	4.0	11.6	11.7	9.3
Sister's College:				
% None	72.0	73.1	73.5	72.9
% Univ. of Georgia	0.0	7.7	8.8	5.9
% ABAC[a]	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
% Out-of-state	0.0	0.0	5.9	2.4
% All others[b]	28.0	19.2	11.8	18.8

a. Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, Tifton, Georgia.
b. Colleges in Georgia excluding UGA and ABAC.

Program Evaluation

At the end of each Ag Horizons program, students were asked to complete a postconference questionnaire. A-Likert scale, which measures the extent or intensity with which the respondent agrees with or disagrees with a particular statement, was used to measure the students' college plans before and after the conference (Gay 1980). Specifically, students were asked to agree or disagree with statements about their college plans. Changes in student plans that occurred during the conference were analyzed by paired Student's *t* tests to determine the statistical significance of these changes. The results of the analysis, shown in table 4, indicate that Ag Horizons had a positive effect 1) on student plans to attend college, 2) on student plans to attend the University of Georgia as a freshman, and 3) on student plans to enroll in the University of Georgia's College of Agriculture.

A frequency distribution of student responses to item 5 in table 4 indicated that 21 percent of the students were totally committed to attending the University's College of Agriculture, both before and after the program (a student response of 10 was interpreted as a total commitment, while nine or below was less than total commitment). The remaining 79 percent of students were less than totally committed to attending the University's College of Agriculture, either before or after the program. The program's influence on the plans of this latter group to attend

Table 4. Comparisons of College Plans before and after Attending Ag Horizons, 1985 to 1987

Statement	Mean Evaluations[a] Before	After	Change	t-score[b]
1. You plan to attend college	9.54	9.71	0.17	2.62***
2. You plan to attend college in the State of Georgia	9.07	9.24	0.17	1.31
3. You plan to attend UGA as a freshman	6.12	6.47	0.35	1.71*
4. You plan to attend UGA after attending a smaller college	6.68	6.34	-0.52	-1.46
5. You plan to enroll in UGA's College of Agriculture	7.20	7.92	0.72	3.43***

a. where 10 = strongly agree and 1 = strongly disagree.
b. change statistically different at the following levels of significance:*** = .01; ** = .05; * = .10.

the University's College of Agriculture was positive for 55 percent, neutral for 25 percent, and negative for 20 percent of these students. These data suggest that the Ag Horizons program may not have the same impact on all of its participants.

Shown in table 5 are mean evaluations of the program using a Likert scale. These data suggest that students strongly agreed that Ag Horizons was enjoyable and educational, that the program had changed their impressions of the University and College, and that the program would be recommended to a friend or relative. Students also felt that the program had influenced their college plans.

Table 5. Assessment of Ag Horizons by Students Attending the Program, 1985 to 1987

Question	1985	1986	1987	All
	mean evaluation[a]			
You found Ag Horizons to be enjoyable	9.6	9.8	9.6	9.6
You found Ag Horizons to be a learning experience	9.8	9.9	9.6	9.8
Your impressions of UGA have changed after attending Ag Horizons	9.7	9.7	9.7	9.7
Your impressions of the College of Ag have changed after attending Ag Horizons	9.5	9.8	9.6	9.7
Ag Horizons has had no effect on your college plans	2.6	3.0	3.4	3.1
You would recommend Ag Horizons to a friend or relative	9.6	9.6	9.6	9.6

a. where 10 = strongly agree and 1 = strongly disagree.

Data on student backgrounds were combined with student evaluations of Ag Horizons in a statistical model to identify student profiles that were particularly receptive to the program. A change in student plans to enroll in the College of Agriculture, reported in table 4, was defined as the dependent variable in a multiple-regression analysis. Factors hypothesized to be associated with changes in student plans were based on observation, previous experience, and studies by Riesenberg (1987) and Slocombe (1986). The factors are shown in table 6, along with mean values, coefficients (B values), and standard errors of estimates.

All factors shown in table 6 were expected to have a positive influence on the student's plans to attend the College of Agriculture. The program was expected to have a greater impact on older students who are actively choosing among schools and colleges. The program was also expected to have a greater impact on students who have had previous knowledge or experience

Table 6. Factors Associated with Changes in Student Plans to Enroll in the College of Agriculture, 1985 to 1987 (ordinary least squares regression)

Variable Name	Variable Description	Mean	Coefficient[a]
Dependent	Post-Pre response to statement "You plan to enroll in UGA's College of Agriculture"	0.72	
Independent			
AGE	Student's age	16.48	0.353 (0.278)
RCUGA	Binary: 1 if family member attended UGA; 0 if otherwise	0.28	0.435 (0.463)
HHHH	Binary: 1 if student is member of 4-H club; 0 if otherwise	0.48	-0.940** (0.448)
FFA	Binary: 1 if student is member of FFA; 0 if otherwise	0.54	0.442 (0.450)
FARM	Binary: 1 if student's father works in agriculture; 0 if otherwise	0.42	-0.921*** (0.445)
LEARN	Response to statement "You found Ag Horizons to be a learning experience"	9.78	1.004*** (0.434)
CHANGE	Response to statement "Your impression of the College has changed after attending Ag Horizons"	9.65	0.254 (0.340)

$R^2 = 0.265$; $\bar{R}^2 = 0.186$; Number of observations = 73

a. standard error shown in parentheses.
**Significant at the alpha = .05 level.
***Significant at the alpha = .01 level.

with the College of Agriculture and its many service programs. Students with relatives who are University alumni, students with 4-H or FFA experience, and students from farm backgrounds were expected to respond favorably to the program. Likewise, students who learned from the program and those who received a favorable impression of the College were expected to be more favorably inclined to enroll in the College.

Ordinary least-squares regression estimates of the statistical model indicate that the influence of Ag Horizons on student plans to enroll in the College of Agriculture was positively associated with 1) student age, 2) a family member attending the University, 3) FFA membership, 4) finding Ag Horizons to be a learning experience, and 5) receiving a favorable impression of the College. Of these, only the variable "finding Ag Horizons to be a learning experience" was statistically significant at the .10 level or better.

The impact of Ag Horizons on student plans to enroll in the College was negatively associated with 4-H membership and with having a father in agriculture. Reasons for these unexpected negative associations may have been due to program design and emphasis. The Ag Horizons program is designed for students with nonfarm backgrounds and/or nonagricultural experiences. Thus, it may have been less informative and/or less convincing to those with such experience. Negative media publicity on production agriculture during the study period may also have contributed to these results. These findings suggest that the Ag Horizons program may not have the same effect on all students. Program planners should consider how these effects differ across student groups in tailoring future programs.

Interest in Majors

During the Ag Horizons program, students visited with faculty and/or students from various departments in the College of Agriculture (see appendix). Departmental visits were used to help students learn more about the diversity of subjects in the college and to select a preliminary major. Students were asked to rank their interest in majors on the postconference questionnaire. Participants ranked preveterinary medicine first, followed by animal/dairy science, agricultural engineering, agricultural economics, and agronomy. With the exception of preveterinary medicine, student preferences for majors were generally consistent with enrollments during the study period (1985 to 1987).

Concluding Remarks

This paper has evaluated a campus visitation program at the University of Georgia's College of Agriculture. The program, entitled Ag Horizons, was designed to recruit high school students and to provide a better understanding of and appreciation for agriculture. This paper found that students attending the conference were favorably impressed with the experience, the College of Agriculture, and the University of Georgia. Students also felt that the conference had a positive impact on their college plans.

Although the Ag Horizons program has had a beneficial impact on the recruitment process, some questions remain concerning its effectiveness. First, has the program had a positive effect on actual enrollments? Preliminary data indicate that 52 percent of the 1985 participants have subsequently enrolled in the College. No data are yet available for the 1986 and 1987 participants.

Participants in the Ag Horizons program were predominantly high school juniors and seniors, while College enrollments are predominantly college juniors and seniors. If Ag Horizons participants attend a junior college prior to enrolling in the College, at least four years may lapse before data would truly reflect the program's effectiveness as a recruitment strategy.

Follow-up studies would also have to determine how many participants who later enrolled in the College would not have done so otherwise.

Second, for a given expenditure, how do the costs and benefits of campus visitation programs compare to other recruitment techniques? In assuming the cost effectiveness of alternative recruitment strategies, both direct and indirect costs and benefits should be taken into consideration. For many schools, the problem may be one of allocating resources to support a mix of recruitment programs. Thus, a relevent question is one of how campus visitation programs will complement or compete with existing recruiting efforts.

Third, which student groups should be targeted by campus visitation programs, and how can programs be designed for maximum effectiveness? Programs aimed at prospective students from farm or rural backgrounds may be less effective in recruiting students from a suburban background. To ensure a broad-based appeal, campus visitation programs may want to emphasize the scientific, business, and humanitarian aspects of agriculture.

Despite these and other questions, the Ag Horizons program has been well received by prospective students, their parents, and their counselors. Its continued growth and widening sponsorship in the agribusiness sector may be the strongest indicators of the program's influence to date.

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Appendix

1987 AG Horizons Program

AGRICULTURAL HORIZONS '87
A Career Institute

WEDNESDAY, August 5, 1987

6:00 - 7:00 PM	Hill Hall Dorm, UGA Campus Registration
7:00 - 8:00	Introductions and Orientation 212 Conner Hall Presiding: Mr. Billy Patterson Field Representative At Large Georgia Farm Bureau Official Welcome: Dr. William P. Flatt Dean & Coordinator UGA College of Agriculture
8:00 - 11:00	Driving Tour of the UGA Campus and Athens Tate Student Center Bowling at Beechwood Lanes Fast Food Survival Fare (At Your Expense)

THURSDAY, August 6, 1987

8:00 AM	Breakfast at Snelling Hall
9:00 - 9:05	Opening Session 212 Conner Hall Presiding: Dr. Forrest W. Nutter Chairman Ag Horizons
9:05 - 9:25	"The Role of Education in Agriculture" Dr. Chris J. B. Smit Associate Dean and Director Resident Instruction UGA College of Agriculture
9:25 - 10:15	"Agricultural Careers: The Root of Our Economy" Janet Rodekohr News Editor UGA Cooperative Extension Service
10:15 - 10:25	Refreshment Break
10:25 - 10:45	"The Importance of Agriculture in Georgia" Mr. Robert L. Nash President Georgia Farm Bureau
10:45 - 11:30	Tour of the Veterinary School
11:30 - 12:45	Lunch at Snelling Hall
12:45 - 5:00	Assemble in 212 Conner Hall for Laboratory Visits on South Campus Areas to visit will include: 1. Agricultural Economics 2. Agricultural Engineering 3. Creamery (with an ice cream break) 4. Entomology 5. Food Science 6. Horticulture 7. Plant Pathology
5:00 - 6:30	Free Time at Dorm
6:30 - 10:30	Georgia Square Mall Dinner and Movie (At Your Expense)

FRIDAY, August 7, 1987

8:00 AM	Breakfast at Snelling Hall
9:00 - 9:10	212 Conner Hall Presiding: Dr. Wen Williams Associate Director Resident Instruction UGA College of Agriculture
9:10 - 12:30	Tour of Teaching and Research Facilities 1. Animal Facilities 2. Greenhouses 3. Riverbend Laboratories 4. Rhizotron
12:30 - 2:30	Lunch at College Square (At Your Expense) A Visit to the UGA Bookstore
2:30 - 3:00	Tour of Heritage Hall Butts-Mehr Building
3:00 - 3:05	212 Conner Hall Presiding: Dr. Chris Smit
3:05 - 3:45	UGA Student Information Workshop 1. Admissions 2. Financial Aid, Scholarships 3. Core Curriculum, Majors 4. Student Organizations
3:45 - 4:00	Refreshment Break
4:00 - 4:15	Film
4:15 - 5:00	Panel Discussion "Opportunities for College of Agriculture Graduates" Moderator: Dr. Wen Williams
5:30 - 7:00	Swimming at Lake Herrick
7:00 - 9:30	Cook-out at Flinchum's Phoenix

SATURDAY, August 8, 1987

9:00 AM	Breakfast (At Your Expense)
10:00 - 11:00	Assemble at Dorm for Tour of Botanical Gardens (Parents Invited)
12:00 - 1:30	Luncheon at the Georgia Center (Parents Invited) Presiding: Dr. Chris Smit

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